Impacts of parental involvement in school activities on academic achievement of primary school children

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Abstract

The study explores the extent of parental involvement in school activities and its relationship with schooling process among primary school children. Parental involvement questionnaire and children academic questionnaire with two rating scales each were administered to 288 children and 125 teachers from six primary schools. The study found a positive significant relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children's academic standing (r =.766, p<.01) and the provision of key school items related to schooling outcomes (r =.733, p<.01) respectively. Parents-teacher conferences and parent-teacher face-to-face contacts were perceived to be desirable modes of communications that impacts children's school academic achievement.

Key words: Parental involvement, academic achievement, parental participation, primary school, school activities

1. Introduction

In school and family context, parental involvement has been defined as representing different behaviors and practices presented by parents both at home and school. These practices and behaviours have been viewed as main factors to determine educational success in many schools. According to Levanda (2011:927) parental involvement includes a wide variety of actions parents take for the benefit of children's academic success at school. These include parenting style, parental expectations and aspirations, home rules and parental supervision; parents' attitudes towards children activities, helping with homework, visiting the school to talk to teachers, and beliefs regarding their child's education (Fan & Fen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Shute, Hansen & Underwood, 2007; Levand, 2011; Porumbu& Necsoi, 2013).

Recent researches have shown that parents involvement in multiple activities including learning activities at home, effective communication between teachers and parents, participation in school activities, talking with the child about school, bringing a cake to a party, presenting in front of the child's class, and getting actively involved in shaping the school's policies by attending school

conferences (Singh et al., 1995; Epstein et al., 1997; Zhan, 2006; Tan & Goldberg, 2009; Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011). These parental behaviours and activities they are involved have been reported to have positive relationship with a range of positive children outcomes (Zhan, 2006; Uludag, 2008) and largely determine personality development and academic achievement of children (Khajehpour, 2011; Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013).

Castro, Casas, Martin, Lizasoain, Asencio and Gaviria, (2015) ably capped it by adding that parental involvement is an individual right and responsibility for families, and social need and should be considered as a lever to promote the academic achievement of the children. However, Epstein et al (1997) was of the opinion that parental involvement has six dimensions including parenting, communicating with the school, volunteering at school, learning at home, participating in school decision making, and collaborating with community.

These dimensions are embedded within several activities and behaviors such as establishing daily family routines, monitoring out-of-school activities, establishing supportive home environments for children, encouraging parents to play meaningful roles in school governance, expressing high expectations for achievement(Castro et al., 2015; Chen & Gregory, 2010; Tan & Goldgerg, 2009; Strayhorn, 2010; Zhan, 2006;), awareness of the children's progress in school, and valuing of learning, and encouraging self-discipline and hard working.

In support of that Singh, Bickley, Keith, Trivette, and Anderson (1995) established four components of parental involvement: parental aspirations for the children's education, parent-child communication about school, home structure and parental participation in school related activities (Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013). In the 1997 scholars informed that home and school involvements were the major two loci of parental involvement (Epstein et al., 1997). The home-school partnership model is characterized by practices within homes in which parents and children's can be involved in such things as engaging in educational activities at home, school support by parents, and involvement in school and community agencies (Shumow & Miller, 2001). The home-school partnership manifests children's interest for their work, confidence, respect, and obedience towards schooling. The partnership has been viewed as a mean to influence students respect and academic achievement and has been built on two major activities: home activities (i.e. parent-child discussion about school programs, plans, and activities) and school activities (i.e. parent-teacher communication, parents attending school organisations, parents volunteering at school).

2. Theoretical background: theory and research context

However, Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence representing reciprocity relationship between school and home partnership presented in figure 1 is widely cited in the discipline. According to Epstein (1995), three major contexts are recognized (the family, the school, and the community) in which students learn and grow. In this model, there are practices that schools, families, and communities perform separately and the other jointly in order to hopefully influence children's learning, development and academic achievement.
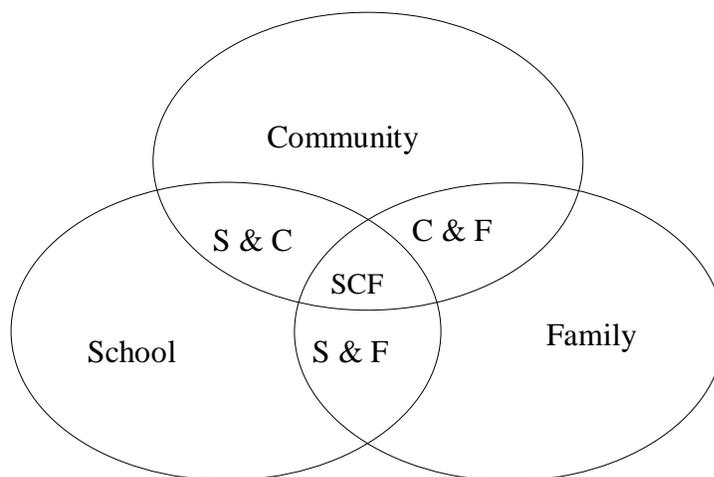
Fig. 1: Model of overlapping spheres of influence of the family, the school, and the community on children learning.

Source: Epstein, 1986
Key: S&C = School and community, C&F = Community and family, S&F = School and family, SCF = School, community and family

The model illustrates different sources of influence to a child and these sources force multiple possibilities for a child to achieve academic excellence. For example, at one point the child can be in the community, at other times at school, and the other times with the family. Then there are times when the child is influenced by twin forces such as the school and community in civil activities, or within school and family such as when the school writes to the parents, and then could be under the influence of community and family such as in village assembly. And one could also visualize a situation when the child is under the influences of the three forces such as during school calling conferences where the community and parents are involved. These multiple sources of influence forces a child to acquire acceptable skills, being knowledgeable and well informed in both school and life aspects.

The focal point on parental involvement has its roots in research pointing out the possible positive relationship it may have on children's schooling perfomance (Epstein, 1986, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). It is on this note that Epstein (2001) states that parents who are informed and involved in their children's school affairs can positively influence their child's attitudes, aspirations, and achievements. Parental awareness and interest in their children's learning and school activities tend to nod and cue their children about the importance of schooling, and this may lead to more positive behaviors and enhance the teachers' morale (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Education practitioners, and policy makers alike, intuitively accept the importance of parental involvement at home and schools. Thus, it is reported that academic achievement is positive related to having parents who enforce rules at home and make follow up in school to enhance their children academic success (Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011; Cotton & Wikelund,

2001). However, knowing how to meaningfully engage them for the benefit of children is less understood (Singh et al., 1995). Bempechat (1992) saw reason in this by stressing that school administrators and teachers face challenges related to reaching out to parents in positive ways, using strategies that will result in improved children academic achievement, and balancing the needs of parents and professional autonomy is a reliable option.

In the changing world of knowledge and skills, the society aspires and expects their children achieve academic excellence with well-informed schools. There has been a long time notion that key criterion to judge one's true potentialities and capabilities while at school is perhaps the academic achievement. If children perform poor parents turn to school that it has not achieved its core objectives of being a schools and the schools point figure to parents that they were not involved enough to prepare their children to acquire academic excellence (Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011; Machumu, Lawuo & Anathe, 2015). This puts great pressures on the minds of the children and their parents. Parents are often eager to support their children's learning though not all of them know how to help, or why their involvement is important. Moreover, many parents do not have out-of-school programs for their children. Not only because they are not aware of it, but also they lack resources and knowledge on how they should be prepared and implemented.

Parents with less formal education and low-income tends to be preoccupied with survival strategies and thus either focus inward on the family, or time does not permit them to pursue home-school involvement strategies that may improve child's schooling. The current study is intended to explore parameters of parental involvement on school activities and its possible impacts on academic achievement of primary school children, specifically based on parental involvement in school matters, parent-teacher communication, and parental participation in school activities. In this study we intended to explore the impacts of parental involvement in school activities and the possible impacts on academic achievement of primary school children in Arusha city, Tanzania.

3. Objectives of the study
The study explores the manner and extent of parental involvement in school activities and the possible impacts on schooling outcomes of primary school children in Arusha city, Tanzania. More specifically, the study sought to achieve three objectives:
   i. Examine parental involvement in school activities and its impacts on primary schools children academic achievement.
   ii. Investigate the teachers' conception of the nature and desirability of parent-teacher communication on children academic achievement
   iii. Examine the relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children academic achievement.

4. Research questions
This study was guided with three research questions including:
   i. How does parental involvement in school activities and its impacts on primary school children academic achievement?
   ii. What are teachers' conception of the nature and desirability of parent-teacher communication on children's academic achievement?
   iii. Are there any relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children's academic achievement?

5. Methodology

An exploratory sequential mixed methods design was utilized in the search of appropriate data for the study. We initially distributed questionnaire and then conducted interview to the selected respondents. The data obtained from questionnaires helped to design appropriate interview questions due to the fact that important true characteristics were determined from questionnaires. Both data form questionnaires and interview were collaborated and triangulated with data obtained from school official records.

5.1 Participants

The study involved two hundred and eighty eight (288) students and one hundred twenty five (125) ordinary teachers, who participated in filling the questionnaires with regards to manner and extent of parental involvement in school activities and the possible effects on schooling outcomes of primary school children in Tanzania.

5.2 Data collection

Data were generated by using informants' questionnaires, school records and interviews. We employed rating scales, interview schedules, and official school records. Four rating scales were used in this study. Two scales for pupils, and the other two for the teachers, in the sense that they may comprise the basic patterns of family-school-community partnership articulated by Epstein (1986 & 2001). Students and teachers' questionnaire items were rated on the four-point Likert type scale ranging from "Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1)". Important official documents checklist was used utilized the required school records related to the subject under study.

5.3 Data analysis

Data obtained through rating scales which were coded and total scores by major sections or items representing cluster was computed. Frequencies, descriptive statistics, t-test for independent samples, Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Correlations were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Correlation (r) was used to determine relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children's academic achievement.

6. Results

6.1 Parental involvement in overseeing children school work

Table 1 illustrates the results of the pupils' assessment. The total scores for parental involvement scale (PIS) were obtained by adding all the items in the scale. The maximum score that one was expected to get in parental involvement was 40, implying that if one scored 4 points in each item, one could get 4 points times 10 items, making for a total of 40 scores. The minimum score expected was thus 10, implying that if one scored 1 point in each item in the scale, one could get 1 point times 10 items, making for a total of 10 points. This means that the higher one scored in the PIS, the higher the frequency of parental involvement in their child's education. For the purpose of data analysis, the responses were given some weights such that 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 1
Parental involvement in their children education (n=288)

Item No.	Statement	Rating				Total	%	Ranks
		SA	A	D	SD			
		1	2	3	4			
1	My parents ask me about homework regularly.	628	345	26	3	1002	86.98	**6**
2	My parents help me with homework.	492	309	76	24	901	78.21	**8**
3	My parents discuss with me about my school day.	400	390	82	17	889	77.17	**9**
4	My parents talk to me about my future schooling.	864	168	26	3	1061	92.10	**4**
5	I talk with my parents about my teachers often.	464	303	86	28	881	76.48	**10**
6	My parents provide time to study at home.	932	120	16	7	1075	93.32	**3**
7	My parents regularly check my exercise books.	360	495	48	9	912	79.16	**7**
8	My parents encourage me to work harder in school.	924	144	14	2	1084	94.09	**2**
9	My parents provide me with learning materials such as exercise books, pen, pencils, and text books.	752	276	14	1	1043	90.54	**5**
10	My parents think that I will join secondary education.	1020	84	4	3	1111	96.44	**1**
	Weighting factor	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	—	—	—

According to the pupils' responses, most of parents aspire and expect their children to join secondary education. This was their first concern. It was followed by the extent to which parents were encouraging their children to work harder in school. The third concern of the parents was to provide their children with studying time at home. Talking with a child about schooling was the fourth parents concern. According to pupils' responses, most of parents agreed with the statement that parents were involved in their education by asking about homework regularly, checking their exercise books, and helping them with homework. These were parents' sixth, seventh and eighth concerns respectively. The findings revealed that parental involvement at home, especially parents asking their children about homework regularly, and helping them with homework had some significant relationship with children's academic achievement. These findings are in line with Ho Sui-Chu and Willims (1996) who found that, the involvement at home, especially parents discussing schoolwork and helping children plan their programs, had the strongest impact on schooling outcomes.

6.2 Parental provision of the key school items to their children

The Parental Provision Scale (PPS) sores were obtained by adding all frequencies for all items in the scale (Table 4.2). The maximum points one was expected to get was 50, implying that if one obtained 5 frequencies in each item one could get 5 points times 10 items, making for a total of 50 points. The minimum points one was expected to get was zero, implying that if one scored zero in

each item in the scale, one could get zero points times 10 items, making a total of zero points. This means that the higher one scored in the PPS, the higher the frequency of parental involvement in their child's education.

Table 2
Parental provision of key school items (n=288)

Item No.	Statement	Number of times provided						Total	%	Ranks
		0	1	2	3	4	5			
1	Bought you exercise books.	0	2	20	36	84	1210	1352	93.89	1
2	Bought you a pen	0	8	40	81	112	1015	1256	87.22	3
3	Checked your school assignments	0	13	52	180	376	330	951	66.04	6
4	Provided you time for studying at home.	0	10	16	75	192	970	1263	87.70	2
5	Discussed with you about your school teachers.	0	34	88	168	252	305	847	58.82	9
6	Checked your school attending progress	0	32	76	96	168	520	892	61.94	8
7	Provided you money for lunch.	0	15	38	60	180	835	1128	78.33	4
8	Provided you money for transport	0	12	26	123	120	620	901	62.56	7
9	Gave you letter to school	0	31	50	63	44	50	238	16.53	10
10	Provided you a place for studying at home	0	16	52	108	132	710	1018	70.69	5
	Average Score	0.0	17.3	45.8	99.0	166.0	656.5	_	_	_

According to the pupils' responses, most of parents were providing their children with key school items. The children were provided with exercise books as it was ranked first, with 1352(93.89%) total sores. Moreover, pupils reported that their parents were proving them time for studying at home, as it has ranked second, with 1263 (87.70%) total scores. This followed by pupils who reported that their parents were buying them pen which ranked third, with 1256 (87.22%) total scores. It seems that, parents were less frequently giving their children letters to school as it was ranked tenth, with 238 (16.53%) total scores. The overall picture is that children believe that their parents are greatly involved in their schooling matters as they were providing them with key school

items. This was consistent with Epstein (1995) findings that the most basic involvement of parents in their child's schooling is the provision of basic needs, monitoring of school activities, and providing home environments that were learner friendly.

6.3 Desirability of parent-teacher communication

The total scores for parent-teacher communication scale (PTCS) again were obtained by adding all scores in the scale, after weighting. The maximum score one was expected to get in parent-teacher communication was 40, implying that if one scored 4 points in each item, one could get 4 points times 10 items making a total of 40 score. The minimum scores one expected to get was 10, implying that if one scored 1 point in each item in the scale; one could get one point times 10 items, making a total of 10 points. Thus, the higher one scored in the scale, the higher the desirability of regular parental communication with the school. For the purpose of the data analysis, the responses were given some weights such that 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 3
Parent-teacher communication about schooling activities (n=125)

Item No.	Statement	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Total	%	Ranks
1	The parent-teacher face-to-face conversation about children's learning will improve parent's attitudes towards teachers.	380	72	10	1	463	92.60	**2**
2	Phone call to both parents and teachers will help to improve children's discipline.	72	93	62	45	272	54.40	**10**
3	Sending parents written letters about their children's materials needs help completion of school assignments.	188	150	36	10	384	76.80	**8**
4	Sending home school progress reports on children's academic achievement will help to improve children's performance.	336	111	2	3	452	90.40	**4**
5	School parent-teacher conference helps to improve children's attendance rates.	368	93	4	0	465	93.00	**1**
6	Parents contacts with teachers rise awareness on the importance of their children's education.	368	87	6	1	462	92.40	**3**
7	Parental involvement in school functions such as academic exhibition, sports, and graduations improves children's school performance.	268	156	12	1	437	87.40	**5**
8	School parent-day helps parents and teachers for collaboration to improve academic achievement.	252	156	10	0	418	83.60	**6**
9	Teachers who visit children's homes can teach the children better.	228	132	32	8	400	80.00	**7**
10	Parent-teacher casual contacts outside the school can help the child's progress.	52	117	80	33	282	56.4	**9**
	Weighting factor	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	__	__	__

The results show that parent-teacher conferences were ranked first, with 465 (93%) total scores. Parent-teacher face-to-face conversation about children's learning was ranked second, with 463 (92.60%) total scores. Parents' regular contacts with teachers were ranked third, with 462 (92.40%) total scores. Sending home school progress reports on children's academic achievement was ranked fourth, with 452 (90.40%) total scores. However, phone calls to teachers and parents was ranked last (10th), with 272 (54.40%) total scores, and so was not deemed highly desirable. Findings maintain that parental involvement –parent-school communication has a clear relationship with children academic achievement although difference means should be applied. The overall picture here is that, most of the teachers think that home-school and school-home communication systems may improve children's schooling outcomes.

6.4 Relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children's academic achievement

Questionnaires were distributed to 288 respondents measuring three important scales: parental involvement in school activities, parental provision of the key school items and academic achievement. Table 4 present the survey results of the relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children's academic achievement which were analyzed through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation:

Table 4
Relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement (n=288).

Variables	1	2	3
1. Parental involvement in school activities	-		
2. Parental provision of the key school items	.662**	-	
3. Academic achievement	.766**	.733**	-

Note. **$p<.01$

The findings suggest that there was an existence of a positive and significant relationship between parental involvement in the school activities of their children and academic achievement ($r = .766$, $p< .01$). In addition, parental provision of key school items and academic achievement were related ($r = .733$, $p< .01$). This confirmed the hypothesis that there was a significant relationship between the level of parental involvement in school activities and their children's academic achievement. Similarly, the findings reported positive relationship ($r = .662$, $p< .01$) between parental involvement and parental provision of the key school items.

The view is supported by Henderson and Berla (1994) that children who interact with their parents on schooling matters had high completion rates of their homework, better grades and test scores, and more self-directed behavior. It seems that when the parents monitor homework, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, are active in parents–teacher associations, and help children develop plans for their future; children are more likely to respond and do well in school (Cotton & Wikelund, 2005). Also these findings are consistency with Tan & Goldberg (2009) and Porumbu and Necsoi (2013) who found that parental involvement in the particular arena of children's schooling has benefited from a multidimensional (dedication of resources by parents to the child within educational domain) conceptualization and however, parental involvement dimensions were proved to have stronger indicator and relationship of the school achievement than some family socio-demographic traits.

7. Conclusion

Parental involvement pertains in two settings-home and school- and the association between them and children academic performance were the focal point of this study. Importantly, the study has revealed a significant and positive relationship between parental involvements in the schooling of their children's academic achievement. As a matter of fact, parental engage on provision of key school items, children school work at home and mutual interaction with children about future schooling revealed to produce positive impacts on children academic achievement. Moreover, parents-teacher conferences and parent-teacher face-to-face contact were perceived to be the most nature and desirable systems of communication that may improve not only children's school outcomes but also discipline, attitude and attendance rates. In spite of phone calls being one of the popular nature of communication to many people, especially in the urban areas was not highly desirable. It is important, however, to note that parental involvement in school activities is not only predictors of children's school outcomes as many other important factors stand to influence academic excellence.

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Parent & Home Involvement in Schools. Table of Contents. Preface I. A Broad View of Involvement. A. Different Caretakers, Different Needs, Different Agendas B. Surveying What Your School Does To Enhance Home Involvement C. The Impact of Family Involvement on the Education of Children D. Intervening to Enhance Home Involvement in Schooling E. Family-School Partnerships. II. Involving reluctant primary caretakers is difficult and often handled at school as a low priority. (1) basic obligations of parents to children and school (e.g., providing food, clothing, shelter; assuring health and safety; providing child rearing and home training; providing school supplies and a place for doing school work; building positive home conditions for learning) Parents' involvement in home learning activities makes an important difference to children's attainment (and social behaviour) at age three plus through to the age of 10, when the influence of other background factors have been taken into account (such as family socio-economic status, mothers' education, income and ethnicity).9. The impact of parental involvement for school age children. Evidence indicates that parental involvement continues to have a significant effect on achievement into adolescence and even adulthood. They. The impact of parental involvement in reading on achievement. Keywords: Pre-school education, Academic achievement, Pre-school experience, Early childhood program. Introduction Education which is given in group setting to the age of round about three up to five years old children is called pre-school education. Pre-school education is designed to investigate and assist the mental, physical • Hundred percent of the teachers are of the view that the existing pre-schools in the private sector are not affordable for parents belonging to low socio-economic status in the society. Majority of the children participate actively in classroom activities. • Pre-school has enormous positive impact on the future social and educational life of a child that's why it receives so much importance in developed countries, unfortunately, in Pakistan. The Dialogue.